

## Mary Lou Terrien

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**From:** Melanie Markowicz <melmarkowicz@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 23, 2016 12:47 PM  
**To:** Mary Lou Terrien; House Clerk  
**Cc:** Rep. Chris Afendoulis (District 73); Rep. Lee Chatfield (District 107); SenPMacGregor@senate.michigan.gov  
**Subject:** Written Testimony Regarding House Bill 5232

Dear Clerk Terrien:

Below is my written testimony regarding proposed House Bill 5232 intended for reading at the House Local Government Committee meeting tomorrow. Many thanks for your assistance in this matter, as I cannot attend in person.

Kindest Regards,  
Melanie A. Markowicz

Dear House Members:

Our architectural legacy in Michigan is strong, and it is worth cherishing and safeguarding. As a resident of Michigan, I want to express my deepest concern regarding House Bill 5232. Local historic districts help to preserve our shared heritage, distinctive communities and architecture, help raise and maintain property values, protect homeowner's investments, keep our neighborhoods more environmentally sustainable, are magnets for tourism, and simply feel good to be in.

Using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation is absolutely necessary, and having the option to use other standards for local historic district is problematic for several reasons. By using the SOI Standards we ensure that each community in Michigan lives up to its potential, and that the guidelines that Historic District Commissions use are consistent, not only with other Michigan communities, but also other communities across the country. Why is this consistency so important? Many federal programs, including grants and tax incentives, use the SOI Standards as a baseline for receiving funding. These funds have and will continue to be a lifeline for Michigan property owners in order to rehabilitate and restore their properties, and contribute to the revitalization and maintenance of Michigan towns and cities. Some have argued that these Standards are too narrow and do not fully allow for substitute materials, even if they appear to mimic historic materials, and that this creates undue financial hardship for property owners. This is simply not true. The Standards encourage matching materials, but it is not required, and local historic district commissions have and do recommend alternative materials. It must be noted that our architectural heritage only stands because of quality of materials, craftsmanship, and their maintenance through time. The SOI Standards are the tool that allows them to remain with integrity for all citizens now and in the future.

Requiring 2/3 of the proposed local historic district property owners to vote for the designation is problematic as well. We would not expect property owners to vote for specific engineering and zoning safety regulations, because they are not likely to be engineers and would not be knowledgeable about the architectural complexities of safety and load bearing, etc. Likewise, we cannot nor should we expect property owners to be fully aware of the heritage, integrity, and importance of our architectural legacy and its role in making our communities stronger. That is why citizens elect politicians, and trust in governmental oversight and review. I implore you to make the right decision for all United States citizens, and not just a select few; for those that will live in Michigan in the future, as well as those that do so today.

House Bill 5232 should be resoundingly rejected. This bill would weaken protections for historic resources and threaten the viability and functionality of local historic districts in Michigan. Our historic places and neighborhoods are too important.

Thank you,

Melanie A. Markowicz

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